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Initiative aims to help hospitals improve performance

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For Ray Zavada, improving quality in hospitals is more than just a business venture. It has roots in his personal experience.

Several years ago, his daughter was in a car accident that resulted in serious back injuries. He recalls that while she was in the hospital, two hospital employees came to move her too soon, a move that could have led to more serious injuries.

Then, inefficiencies struck again after Zavada had surgery himself.

The hospital did not bill the insurance company correctly, and Zavada had to act as middleman between the insurer and hospital to get the bill paid.

Personal experiences led to desire to work for a better system

After living through those situations, he thought that the "processes were out of line" and that there had to be a better system.

Unlike many people who see inefficiencies in business or other dealings, Zavada has the background to jump in and make serious suggestions.

Zavada is president and founder of Innovative Productivity Inc., a nonprofit organization he started in 1993 that helps groups change business processes to improve quality.

The organization also runs the McConnell Technology & Training Center.

Recently, Innovative Productivity launched the Healthy Hospitals Initiative, which is designed to use manufacturing techniques to help hospitals identify waste and inefficiencies and to correct those gaps to improve performance.

Hospitals pay for the service, which could identify waste in areas such as wait times, unnecessary or duplicate paperwork, and lab procedures or other tests that have to be reworked.

Lending expertise from manufacturing

Innovative Productivity officials meet with hospital staff and management to identify work processes and tweak those processes to improve efficiency, Zavada said.

"We are not experts in hospitals. (We're) experts in quality and continuous improvement."

IPI will draw expertise in hospital operations and other areas from its partners: the University of Kentucky Manufacturing Center, University Hospital in Louisville, Kentucky Community and Technical College System, Sullivan University and regional quality consultants and hospitals.

Jewish Hospital officials to launch quality-improvement program soon

So far, one hospital in Middlesboro, Ky., and one in Owensboro, Ky., have started using the service, and Jewish Hospital officials plan to start sometime this month, Zavada said.

In addition, three other Louisville-area hospitals are in discussions to implement the program, but Zavada declined to identify them.

Under the program, initiative consultants visit a hospital to conduct a five-day program. During those five days, the consultants and employees devise new policies and procedures that can be quantified and used to gauge the success of the new processes.



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In the next step, members of hospital management then will meet with employees and discuss the results and then implement the new ideas.

Later, the results will be measured and compared and tweaked if need be.

Jewish Hospital signs on to try system

Jewish Hospital will begin using the service in its emergency department during the next few weeks.

In the past, hospital officials have tried to streamline operations and improve efficiency throughout the hospital, but with mixed results, said Jewish Hospital president and CEO Timothy Jarm.

Those efforts were unsuccessful because officials tried to change the organization's culture before finding quality processes to drive the culture shift, he said.

Jarm said he is excited by the plan "to impact the culture by having it impact the process first."

Typically, hospitals form committees from each department to deliberate on new processes or changes within their individual department.

Jewish Hospital CEO likes fast track approach of Healthy Hospital Initiative

But, Jarm said, the appeal of the Healthy Hospital Initiative is its approach of gathering all responsible parties, such as the emergency department, radiology and other ancillary services, in a room and saying, "let's drive results as fast as we can."

For now, the initiative is focusing on area and regional hospitals, but Zavada said he eventually would like to take it nationwide.

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